

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-07 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5473

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MT

SUBJ: MINTOFF SPEAKS AT ANNUAL MLP CONFERENCE

REF: VALLETTA 0755

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING HIS STATEMENTS ON CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES (REFTEL), MINTOFF WARNED THE CONFERENCE THAT MALTA'S DIFFICULTIES ARE NOT OVER AND HARD WORK AND DEVOTION NEEDED TO SURMOUNT THEM. HE CALLED FOR PARTY WORKERS TO STEP INTO THE SHOES OF THOSE WHO NOW HAVE THEIR HANDS FULL WITH ADMINISTRATIVE WORK. END SUMMARY.

2. MINTOFF SAID THAT THE INCREASES IN WAGES AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS DID NOT MEAN THAT THE CRISIS IS OVER, AND WARNED THAT FUEL SITUATION IS MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO BALANCE EXPENDITURE AND REVENUE. BEFORE THE ENERGY CRISIS MALTA'S ANNUAL FUEL BILL WAS FIVE MILLION MALTESE POUNDS AND NOW IT IS BETWEEN 15 AND 20 MILLION POUNDS. THE TOURIST INDUSTRY IS BREAKING ALL RECORDS, BUT IMAGINE HOW MANY TOURISTS WOULD BE NECESSARY TO MAKE UP 15 MILLION POUNDS.

3. PRODUCTION AT THE DRYDOCKS AND OTHER INDUSTRIES HAS INCREASED

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CONSIDERABLY, BUT DRYDOCKS HAS TOTAL PRODUCTION CAPACITY OF ONLY EIGHT MILLION POUNDS, AND IMPORTED RAW MATERIALS ARE BECOMING MORE

AND MORE EXPENSIVE. SOME SUGGESTED THAT GOM SHOULD BORROW, BUT BORROWED MONEY HAS TO BE REPAYED SOME DAY AND THEREFORE GOM MUST FIND OTHER SOURCES. THIS IS WHY FUEL AND ELECTRICITY PRICES HAD TO BE INCREASED, BUT EVEN SO, GOM IS "RISKING" BETWEEN FIVE AND EIGHT MILLION POUNDS (PRESUMABLY A DEFICIT) AND WE ARE WORKING HARD TO CUT THIS DOWN. ADDITIONALLY, PRICES OF OTHER IMPORTED COMMODITIES ARE RISING RAPIDLY AND FORCING GOM TO INCREASE SUBSIDIES TO BETWEEN SIX AND EIGHT MILLION POUNDS.

4. SOME PEOPLE, SAID MINTOFF, HAD OPPOSED HIS EFFORTS TO SQUEEZE UK AND NATO FOR MORE, "BUT NOW WE ARE RECEIVING 16 MILLION POUNDS A YEAR. HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THIS MONEY, GOM WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INCREASE WAGES AND OTHER BENEFITS."

5. MINTOFF CALLED ON ALL TO WORK HARDER. THE WORKING WEEK HAS BEEN REDUCED TO 40 HOURS. THOSE WHO WORK LESS ARE THIEVES, STEALING FROM THEMSELVES, THE SICK AND THE NEEDY, "THEY ARE NOT ROBING MINTOFF OR HIS GOVERNMENT."

6. COMMENT THIS WAS CHARACTERISTIC EXHORTATION FROM MINTOFF. AS WITH THE DRYDOCKS WORKERS LAST YEAR, HE DOES NOT HESITATE TO LASH OUT AT WHAT HE CONSIDERS MALINGERING OR A LESSER DEDICATION TO HARD WORK THAN HE POSSESSES HIMSELF. GETZ

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